"THOSE WHO HAVE HAD TROUBLE CAN SYMPATHISE WITH YOU": PRESS WRITING, READER RESPONSES AND A MURDER TRIAL IN INTERWAR BRITAIN

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Scholars have become increasingly interested in how consumers of culture, as readers, listeners and viewers, make sense of what they read, hear and see, and quite elaborate theorizations of how messages "encoded" in cultural productions are "decoded" have been developed and debated.[1] Summarizing such approaches, David Morley states that the "audience" is now "conceived of as actively decoding the messages they receive from systems of mass communications, and interpreting them in a range of ways, drawing on the particular cultural resources which their social position has made available to them."[2] Gaining more insight into "reception" is important, requiring, as John Storey has put it, consideration of how a text's social meaning "is appropriated and used in the consumption practices of everyday life."[3] It is obvious that people actively interpret texts—Michel de Certeau has even referred to "consumer production"[4]—and that their interpretations might not necessarily accord with the aims of the texts' producers. As Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa have put it, "The reader reworks and re-interprets what is read; his or her contribution cannot be subsumed within the author's version of the meaning of the text."[5]

However, in analyzing the "active reader," some have emphasized the "ideological constraint" imposed by discursive systems. "For these theorists," David Paul Nord writes,

> the turn to interpretation did not reveal an autonomous and empowered reader but rather a reader wholly dependent upon (indeed, created by) the patterns of language and culture—or perhaps even a reader who is the creature of the multinational media conglomerate.[6]

While the constraints of discourse are sometimes overstated, texts are not limitlessly interpretable: not only do they contain specific intended (what Stuart Hall calls "preferred") meanings, but there are also likely to be regularities in the ways that specific audiences interact with them.[7] Ultimately, people rather than "social structures" interpret texts, and they possess not only a social position but also a psychological make-up that is both shared (in terms of fundamental abilities) and individually distinctive (with regard, say, to preferences and temperament). Each person also has accumulated experiences that are particularized and at the same time patterned according to social position or group identity. Readers are neither absolutely "free" nor entirely "constrained," leaving an enormous middle ground that has only begun to be explored historically.

Historical sources for understanding cultural consumption are relatively rare, but some investigators have made the most of the evidence available.[8] As Jonathan Rose has argued (and demonstrated), the questions of what "ordinary readers in history" read and "how they read it" are no longer as unanswerable as they

once seemed.[9] The work of Lawrence W. Levine has been exemplary in this regard, providing a vivid history of both "folk" and "mass" cultures in the United States of America and effectively confronting the stereotype of the passive audience. Not only are audiences selective about mass culture (choosing what to read, watch or listen to), but they also use it actively: "What people *can* do and *do* do," Levine says, "is to refashion the objects created for them to fit their own values, needs, and expectations."[10] Expressive works are by nature "incomplete" and "filled with interstices that need connecting, ambiguities that need resolution, imprecisions that need clarity, complexities that need simplifying."[11] Levine emphasizes how consumers of popular culture invest imaginatively in what they consume, even with regard to seemingly trite cultural products, such as radio soap operas.

One especially fruitful area of research into media narratives has been related to crime reporting, a key element in the popular press in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[12] This history has largely remained one-sided, focusing on writing rather than reading, and any insight into public *reactions* to crime news would therefore be valuable. Combining the topics of crime, press reporting and reader response, this article considers a 1928 British murder trial that saw a woman named Beatrice Pace tried for the arsenic murder of her husband. Catapulted from impoverished obscurity into the headlines, her case fascinated British newspaper readers.[13] Over two hundred of the letters and postcards she was sent have been preserved in a collection of case-related materials kept by her solicitor, providing a rare insight into the ways readers interpreted the press coverage they were offered.[14] Given the source's fragmentary nature, it is difficult to say how "free" or "constrained" readers' interpretations were, but as Nord has suggested, this issue often boils down to a question of scale and perspective.

> Observed at the individual level, human beings appear diverse, idiosyncratic, free. Raise the observation to a higher level of abstraction, and they become more comparable, more predictable, more constrained. This apparent change in human nature is produced not by a change in reality or even philosophy but by a change in methodology, a change in perspective.[15]

Readers were "*both* active and passive, both free and bound, both creative and constrained—not a little of each but a lot of both."[16] The letters written in response to the "Pace case" allow exploration of this issue.[17]

The "Fetter Hill Mystery"

Harry Pace was a quarryman and sheepherder in Fetter Hill, an isolated Gloucestershire hamlet in the Forest of Dean, near the Welsh border. After an illness that began the previous summer, he died on 10 January 1928 at the farmhouse he shared with his wife and five children. After suspicions on the part of Harry's kin led the coroner to delay the funeral and order a post-mortem, the matter attracted the attention not only of the local and regional papers (e.g., the *Dean Forest Guardian* and Gloucester *Citizen*) but also the London press (e.g., the *Times*, *Daily Mail* and *World's Pictorial News*).[18] In March, arsenic was identified as the cause of death, bringing not only Scotland Yard detectives but also new press interest to the Forest of Dean. The inquest held in the nearby town of

Coleford—which led to Beatrice being charged with murder—was reported in detail.

There was evidence that Harry had violently abused his wife, and her marital "martyrdom" (as several papers put it) was a key element in sympathetic press coverage that idealized her as a caring wife and doting mother. She had borne ten children by the age of 38—five of whom had died—further emphasizing her maternal qualities and tragic biography.[19] The popularity of "Mrs. Pace" ensured that a legal defense fund established by her Member of Parliament rapidly filled, enabling her to retain the services of a rising star in the legal profession, Norman Birkett, K.C.[20] The Gloucester trial was a media spectacle, and outside the courtroom raucous crowds expressed support for the "tragic widow." Her case had become a regular feature in the domestic press, and was even given some coverage abroad.[21] Beatrice's decisive acquittal on 6 July was universally acclaimed, and she sold her story to the *Sunday Express*, which published her six-part memoir in July and August 1928. While the *Express* was a more-or-less family-oriented mass circulation paper with a somewhat conservative (indeed, at times, distinctly moralizing) outlook, an expanded version of the memoir appeared between September 1928 and January 1929 in *Peg's Paper*, a popular weekly magazine aimed at young women—particularly shop-girls and domestic servants—that mainly offered fictional romances. The case also led to political debates in Parliament and the editorial pages of both the broadsheet and tabloid press regarding the actions of the coroner, the methods of Scotland Yard and the plight of poor defendants.[22]

The Pace case was a press sensation in 1928. Pace's successful defense fund, the supportive crowds and the gifts sent by strangers provide glimpses of the media's impact that encourage further examination. The sample of letters on which this article is based is not a perfect source, much like the letters to the editor through which Nord has reconstructed reader responses to two Chicago papers. Nevertheless, it is valuable. "The surviving letters," Nord notes of his sources,

> are not a random sample of reader response; they cannot tell us what proportion of readers responded in what specific ways. But they can suggest to us how some readers read, across a broad range of response. They can give us what we now need most in our effort to construct a history of readership: a glimpse into the past of some actual readers reading their newspapers.[23]

The Pace letters can do much the same. After surveying their contents, I will consider the ways that letters from women and men differed and then examine a few general themes to consider what the public reaction to Beatrice Pace tells us about readers' interactions with media narratives.

"I Hope You Will Forgive Me Writing to You but I Felt As If I Must"[24] : The Letters

There are 232 letters in the collection addressed to Beatrice Pace. They contain occasional references to the writers' social class. A few writers were well off—signaled, for example, by references to domestic servants—and some had occupations that could broadly be described as middle class, such as ministers.[25]

Others were clearly poor.[26] Unfortunately, such references are too rare and vague to enable systematic analysis. Similarly, while a few letter writers mention the newspapers through which they had followed the case, the vast majority did not.[27] Other distinctions, however, can be made.

Of 232 letters, 145 (62.5%) had been sent by individual women and 29 (12.5%) by men. In 46 cases (19.8%), the sender's sex could not definitively be determined, and the remaining 12 (5.2%) were sent by couples, groups, children or families. Thus, over three-fifths of the letters were definitely sent by individual women. Nearly all of them were supportive: 220 (94.8%) welcomed Pace's acquittal (one, likely written *before* the trial's end, was hopeful[28]). Only four (1.7%) were critical of the verdict, and eight (3.5%) were neutral, confirming press reports of public support—indeed, "universal compassion"—for Beatrice.[29] Caution is warranted with a sample of this kind, but *some* hostile letters were kept, and there is no indication that others were discarded. All four of the critical letters were anonymous, suggesting that their condemnation of Beatrice would have been unpopular. The Pace children were frequently mentioned, reflecting the press's focus on them. Of the 220 congratulatory letters, 150 (68.2%) refer to "the children" (or to "your dear children"), "your little ones" or "your dear ones." They were also referred to by name, with Beatrice's sickly infant daughter Jean—whose ill health was emphasized by reporters—being named most often. Three-quarters of female writers mentioned the children (either as a group or by name) as did half of male correspondents and about three-fifths of those whose sex could not be identified.

Only one day after the trial, the *News of the World* reported that Pace "was overwhelmed with letters and telegrams congratulating her on her triumphant acquittal."[30] Most of the letters in the correspondence sample were written within a day or two of Beatrice's acquittal (on 6 July), some that very evening, revealing how quickly the news spread—the early-afternoon verdict was reported in some papers' evening editions[31] and a few writers heard about it over the radio[32]—and the immediacy of many people's reactions. Some were sent by people from Gloucester, where the trial was held, or the surrounding area. A Wesleyan minister wrote on 6 July from a nearby town, noting, "As one who was present at the Court this afternoon please receive my sincere congratulations at the result."[33] A Mrs. Edwards from Gloucester stated that her daughter "has been down every day to catch sight of you; she saw you twice [and] also your little family."[34] Most writers had not been so closely connected to events, and Beatrice received letters not only from all over the United Kingdom but also from abroad. I have not followed the case into the international press, but the sample contains letters from Ireland, Canada, Malta and South Africa.[35] Although "thousands of miles away," a Mrs. D. Bain wrote from Alberta to say she had "followed your case right though on reading old country papers, & I would just like to say: here's one who believes in you."[36] From Johannesburg, Mrs. M. Marques stated, "Although so very far away, we have all been praying that your innocence would be proved."[37] Overall, then, while the letters and cards came from a variety of places, they were predominantly from women, nearly exclusively congratulatory, highlighted Beatrice's role as a mother, and had been mostly sent within days of the acquittal.

"My Dear Sister": Women, Identification and Sympathy

As the trial began on 2 July 1928 a *Daily Mail* reporter observed that many elements of the case—such as "its intimate domestic features," its "stories of callous brutality" and "the references to the bitterness of child-bearing"—had made "a deep and wide appeal to women."[38] Women reportedly predominated in the public galleries at the inquest and trial and formed the majority of the crowds that had gathered outside them. The letters sent to Pace suggest that many women identified with her. "Identification," here, refers to placing oneself into another's position or seeing one's own experiences reflected in another's, and both tendencies are apparent in the letters. Of 140 women who wrote to congratulate Pace, 51 (36.4%) explicitly identified with her as women, as mothers, as survivors of a hard life or as victims of domestic violence. Many other female writers may also have done so without saying so directly. Each of these motivations will be further explored.

First, however, the emotional intensity of many letters should be noted. Emily Dunstone wrote from London: "I have followed your case with great interest & sympathy for you from the beginning and always knew you were innocent of any harm to your late husband."[39] Another woman stated, "I have read every word from beginning to end of your case, & I knew what the result would be."[40] Annie Hudson emphasized how her circumstances ("I am an invalid girl," she wrote, "lying upon my back with spinal trouble") had given her "every opportunity of following your case closely from the beginning until the end yesterday."[41] Her interest had been shared by her family—"Night & day you have been in our thoughts & I may say how we have grieved for you during your great trouble"—and at least one neighbor: "A widow lady living in the flat below us have [sic] also followed your case," Hudson wrote, "& she like ourselves have believed in your innocence from first to last." Mrs. Nancy Griffiths wrote that she and "several woman friends" had

> watched your case with the greatest possible interest and deepest sympathy, and we all wish to congratulate you on the splendid bravery and fortitude with which you faced the terrible ordeal.[42]

Such solidarities were not only individual, as a postcard from the (largely working-class) Mothers' Union indicates:

> We women of Berks[hire] Mothers' Union feel we should like you to know how much we have felt for you in your great trial. You have often been in our thoughts & prayers. We hope the rest of your life will be peaceful & happy that your children will grow up to be a credit & comfort to you.[43]

Such emotional involvement is apparent in other letters. Mrs. J. J. Brooks wrote that she and a neighbor "have had many tears over you and we were overjoyed when we heard that you had won the day: we are so glad."[44] Mrs. E. Ransome from Weymouth wrote, "the tears have rolled down my cheeks more than once for you I might tell you," and another woman told Beatrice, "we used to cry reading the touching things regarding your children while you were in prison."[45]

Dora Farrow observed, "Well, dear Mrs. Pace, although we have never met, to us your face is known as well as one of our own family."[46] A woman who signed her letter "Mrs. Anonymous" had "prayed nightly, yea almost hourly" for Pace's acquittal, and E. Gertrude Williams said "we have hardly had patience to wait for the paper every morning."[47] Mrs. C. Whitford exclaimed, "I read your case from the first and said you never done it . . . and every day I had a good cry about you, and I used to say to my sons I only wish I could see dear Mrs. Pace, I would kiss her for all she is worth."[48]

Interest in Pace's fate was sometimes shared within a family. Cecily Coe had told her daughters about the case, and "as young as they are they have hoped you would be alright & they have not forgotten you in their prayers."[49] From Llanelly, Mrs. S. Howells stated that her son had cried after reading testimony by Beatrice's ten-year-old son Leslie in the press. Then:

> Yesterday, Sunday, when we were having our dinner he said quite suddenly to us, "Well, Mrs. Pace is home with her children having dinner today & how nice," he said. Only a boy of 10, [but] you won't believe, Mrs. Pace, how Emlyn has taken to Leslie.[50]

The daughter of a Mrs. Ealey "cried with joy" when told of the acquittal: "She said you have a nice face," Ealey wrote, and "she has cut your picture out of the paper and hung it up."[51] J. M. Kelly had clipped and framed an image of Beatrice and her children, and the Powell family in Pembrokeshire had done the same with a photo from the *News of the World*.[52] Mrs. C. Smith stated:

> I have taken every photo of you and your family, and not a day has passed without kissing your photo and blessing you. Only last Sunday, my husband and son spoke of you and told me to cheer up, that you would be with your friends this Sunday having dinner with them. And all have come true.[53]

Mary A. Chapple wrote that she had kissed Beatrice's "dear face" in the newspapers.[54]

News of the acquittal seems to have led to emotional scenes throughout Britain. "When the *Manchester Evening News* arrived at 5:30 p.m. on Friday," wrote Mrs. S. Baker, "we ran from the house, crying with joy."[55] Mrs. J. S. MacDonald, from Cardiff exclaimed, "O what joy I had today, when one of my married daughters, Mrs. Owen, came running in [the] house & said 'O Mother, Mrs. Pace is discharged'; we both sat down and cried with over-joyment."[56] Alice Price in Pontypore described a comparable scene: "My husband hurried home tea time with the paper & when he said Mrs. Pace 'Not guilty' I had a good cry."[57] Florence Wakefield stated, "I have followed your case with keen interest as though you were my own mother," and she recounted that she "jumped for joy on reading the papers today, to find you are free."[58] "I happened to be cleaning the grate when I had the news," a Welsh woman wrote, adding "I jumped up and clapped my hands and laughed till they thought . . . I was gone mad."[59] A woman wrote from Brixton Hill to let Beatrice know not only that her own "heart bled many times for you and your dear little children" but also that her happiness was shared by her household: "My maid has just told me that she has offered many prayers on your behalf—& is in tears—now—of joy—at the good news."[60]

Clearly, women took a particular interest in Beatrice's story. Some even addressed her as "sister." While this might be in a religious context—"remember we are *sisters* in His sight" —it was not always so: one correspondent described herself as a "stranger but a sister in sympathy" and another wrote, "I have thought so much about you as if you were my own sister."[62] The letters also reflected themes reminiscent of the press's idealization of Beatrice as a wife and mother: 40 of the 140 congratulatory letters sent by women (28.6%) expressed identification as a woman or mother. "I am sure every woman's heart in England goes out to you," Mary Gibson assured her.[63] One woman described her letter as "a mere simple token of sympathy in your great ordeal and injustice as one of your own sex," while another said she had wanted "as a woman to woman" to send "just a little word of comfort."[64] Having cried with happiness upon hearing of the acquittal, Alice Price observed, "We women can feel for each other, can't we?"[65] From Norfolk, Dora Annie Farrow hoped that her letter would demonstrate "how far & wide you are thought of today not only as a mother but as a devoted wife & very brave woman."[66]

The three identities referenced—"mother," "devoted wife" and "very brave woman"—were often mixed, but maternal themes were particularly strong. Some writers focused on Beatrice's suffering when separated from her children while awaiting trial in prison. Hilda M. Vickery wrote from London to say, "I have a baby nearly two, & I realize how you must have felt leaving your dear baby behind."[67] For some female readers, Beatrice's forced separation from her family was particularly painful. "It's only a mother who can feel for you and understand the agony of another mother torn from her children," one woman wrote, claiming "many of us mothers here have shared all along with you in your grief." "There isn't another woman in England who has borne the terrible ordeal you have," she continued, "but you have had splendid courage [and] you deserve the greatest admiration."[68] Mrs. D. Bain wrote "I am a mother & have two daughters, so I understand how you must feel," and two women from Chittlehampton, Devon, "being mothers of families," sent Beatrice "all our love as women to woman."[69] Janet Meek sympathized "as a mother, and a grandmother" and rejoiced "that you are back with your children."[70]

Such underlying sympathies were even stronger among women who saw some echo of their own experience in Beatrice's struggles. As one of the few published letters stated:

> My mother and I are so sorry for you and your little ones. It must be a terrible ordeal for you, but we sincerely hope God will give you strength to pull through and reward you in the end. [. . .] There are plenty [who] believe in your innocence. Those who have had trouble can sympathise with you.[71]

This passage combines themes central to Beatrice's public persona: the good wife and mother beset by injustice who would triumph through the strength of her character, the support of the public and (as a few letter-writers suggested) divine assistance. It also succinctly encapsulates the solidarity based upon common experiences that is a recurring motif in the Pace correspondence. Writing from Ontario, Canada, Maisie Cooper—who identified with Beatrice as a "farmer's wife"—agreed: "It's only those who have suffered that know what sympathy really means."[72] She too had been "scorned" and suffered injustice through false

accusations. Describing Harry Pace as "that brute of a man," she wrote, "may God above deal with him & give him eternal suffering." The head detective in the case—"that blessed officer who tried to make you condemn yourself"—she insisted, "will pay the penalty too, the brute." "Though the sea divides [us]," she concluded, "I am with you in tenderness for your babes."

Jessie Sturgeon was also thankful that Beatrice was "free again to be with your children."[73] "I can feel for you in every way as I've been through so much during my married life," she wrote, saying she used to "wake up in the middle of the night & think & pray for you." "I don't know why I should think so much of you," she observed in closing, but recited a common refrain: "only those who have to bear so much can really have sympathy for others." One woman had devotedly bought the *Liverpool Echo* even though she could ill afford it, explaining "I could not miss one word of Norman Birkett['s] great fight for you."[74] "Like you," she wrote, "I have had a hard life and great deal of trouble," including a sick baby. Mrs. Evie Bull sent congratulations "from one suffering widow to another," stating (without providing details) "my husband's end was tragic like yours."[75] A sense of common suffering could also lead to appeals of a different kind. A woman named Violet wrote from Southend-on-Sea, stating "like yourself, [I] have experienced much unhappiness & misery" due to a profligate (and subsequently deceased) husband who had run up extensive gambling and drinking debts. After explaining a long history of family crises, her letter culminated in a request: for £8 to cover her local tax bill.[76]

Some women saw their own experiences of unhappy or abusive marriages echoed in Beatrice's. Experience with marital violence (whether as a victim or witness, whether within one's own family or those of neighbors) would have likely been widespread, particularly among the working-class women to whom Beatrice particularly appealed. Mrs. F. Steer said she and Pace had "something in common," as both had been married to a "brute husband": "How you could stand by such a man for 18 years," she wrote, "beats me beyond all knowledge." Steer had read Beatrice's memoir, and her adamant devotion had clearly impressed her:

> I was not so young as you when I married, yet after reading about you, I feel such a coward, for I lived only 2 years with my man & that two years is a nightmare to me.[77]

Steer's letter is undated, but it recalls the 29 July installment of Beatrice's memoir in which she compares abandoning a difficult marriage to running away "like a coward."[78] A letter from Florrie Goodridge captures the tone of this sort of letter well:

> When I read our *Echo* and saw you were found not guilty, I thought my heart was going to beat out of me with happiness. . . . I have read every part of your case as it have [sic] come out and in parts it used to make me break my heart, for I understand just how you must have felt, for God knows I have had a lot of it. . . . [79]

Goodridge identified with Beatrice ("you have seemed one of myself all through") and she had also had a "beast of a husband" she had left six years

before. Referring to hostile rumors that had circulated in the Fetter Hill area during the investigation (involving possible affairs or suspicions of poisoning), Florrie stated that she, too, had faced gossip: "I am not a saint, I know," she admitted, but she was not as "people have painted me." Mrs. M. Miller directly identified with Beatrice "I have cried my heart sore for you," she wrote, "for I knew what it is to have a brutal husband":

> I am only a poor woman with a family—8 alive & two dead—& a rotter of a man just the same as yours. I have had many a blow from him & he has threatened my family & myself with a knife & once tried to cut my eldest daughter['s] throat; he has also asked me to drink Lysol & [said] he would buy it. He has tried to drive me & my family to the streets many times, but I have always stuck to my post for I may say I have a very respectful family. . . . [H]e has gone off now for some time now with another woman after a young girl having a baby six years ago to him. Many a wife got clear of such a man but I had no means.[80]

She still hoped for justice: "God," she wrote, "sits high & takes his own time to Punish." It was not necessary to experience poverty or abuse for female readers to be fascinated by Beatrice's case: one correspondent described herself as someone "who is happy enjoying the love of one of the best of husbands."[81] However, several letters show that perceived commonalities—based on gender, maternity or shared struggle—shaped the reactions of female newspaper readers to the case.

"Dear Madam": Men, Respect, Desire and Money

Although men wrote to Beatrice less often, some clearly took an equally strong interest in her case. While containing some similarities, there were also significant differences in content and perspective. Male correspondents found different ways of relating to Beatrice: identification based on certain common experiences, obviously, was not possible. As the number of clearly male letter writers is relatively small, it is correspondingly more difficult to generalize about male reactions to the case. Nonetheless, two prominent themes can still be identified: respect and desire. A third topic—business—also motivated a few letters.

Men's positive evaluations of Beatrice were phrased in terms of respect, praising, for example, her resilience. A Congregationalist minister from Gloucester had observed her in the courtroom:

> I am glad you have borne the ordeal so well, and so calmly, & would like to have seen on your table (with that bottle of smelling salts—I guessed it was this—and glass of water) a bunch of flowers. I would willingly have purchased the flowers, as I told a P.C., but was afraid I should in some way do wrong. One has to be so careful. I—and others—have prayed for you, and now, prayer has been answered.[82]

A similar tone is apparent in a letter from an enlisted soldier in the Grenadier Guards:

> My Platoon Corporal came into the barrack room with an evening paper containing the glad news. It was these words that made us jump for joy: Mrs. Pace Acquitted. We knew that you would be acquitted because we have studied the case in each evening paper and have read through the lines. My chums and I wish you and your children the very best of luck in the future.[83]

An "80-year-old Yorkshireman" had urged a London paper to start "a shilling subscription" for her benefit. "There are many thousands of English women and men would subscribe to such a fund who are in sympathy with your sad circumstances," he said, claiming he had already sent money to "commence" the subscription.[84] A Londoner congratulated her on having passed successfully through "the very gates of Hell": "Happily, you have come through it all triumphantly, and are now in green pastures beside still waters." He urged her to "try and keep up the brave heart":

> We all have a mission to fulfil in this vale of tears. Yours is to be the guardian and protectress of your little offsprings [sic]. In years to come, let them be able to say, "Fancy, what mother should be, and she was that."[85]

Another wrote, "I should like to receive from you one or two flowers plucked by your dear hands, (from your native home) as a souvenir of you, 'such a brave & noble woman.' "[86]

The last letter hinted that some male writers' feelings might have gone beyond respect, perhaps encouraged by press reporting that highlighted Beatrice's attractiveness and the many photographs of her that were printed. A Mr. Needham, married for ten years, wrote from Manchester to say that Harry Pace "was not worthy to have such a lovely young wife like you." "May I say here," he continued, "that had I been a (single) man I should have liked to have had an interview with you." As things were, he contented himself with offering his "fullest sympathy."[87] Beatrice—as well as her eldest daughter—even received several offers of marriage, which they commented upon in the press.[88] (A 48-year-old widow from Stockport, who described herself as "very lonely," asked whether Beatrice might pass along some of the proposals to her, saying, "I would give anything to meet a good man."[89]) A few can be found in the letter sample. A widower from Llanelly, Mr. T. Griffiths, expressed not only his "profoundest sympathy" but also his "truest & sincerest joy & pleasure in your very clear & definite victory." Urging Beatrice to look after herself for her "dear children's sake," he wrote:

> After reading what you have gone through during your married life, am tempted to offer myself to you, that is to say, should you at any time think of re-marrying. Naturally, of course, you cannot think of doing so at this juncture, as I am fully conscious of the terrible strain you have gone through (physically and mentally).[90]

Griffiths wanted to correspond—with a "view to matrimony"—and was eager to "exchange letters (privately and confidentially of course)" so as to "discuss matters secretly." An army corporal named Wilkinson got more quickly to the point in a card with only three sentences. Praising her "glorious acquittal" and "noble exhibition of motherhood," he had always believed her innocent: "to show my admiration I take the liberty of offering you & yours a happy home. Kindly favour an early reply."[91] The most elaborate proposal came from Arthur Williams, a gas-fitter from Desborough and a widower with three children. He told Beatrice that he felt "as if I know you quite well" and would be satisfied "that I have offered to accept you into my life and your dear ones also." Although "not

an angel by any means" (nor "a man of means," having "nothing but what I work for"), he tried "to live out the principles of Christianity." Desborough, he wrote "is quite a pretty little manufacturing town in Northamptonshire [with] fairly good prospects for children."

> Now my Dear Mrs. Pace this may be all too much of a surprise for you. I do not want you to be too hasty in your decision, but pray about it and think it well over. All I am able to promise is that I shall do my best for your happiness as long as we are spared together; that is if you accept, and, if not, I wish your life may [be] full of joy the rest of your days.

He added in a post-script, "Perhaps we might arrange to meet each other somewhere."[92]

Marriage was not the only offer Beatrice received. The day after her acquittal, Hector Dinnie wrote from London, offering to write a play based on her case. "For your permission to do this," he wrote, "I am willing to pay you an agreed percentage on the royalty received by me in the event of a successful production." Dinnie appealed to both personal and public interest:

> You would no doubt find any money received in this way very useful in providing for the future of your children. And besides, the play, if passed by the Censor, would draw public attention to the danger of convicting an innocent person.[93]

Dinnie also wrote to Beatrice's solicitor, stating he wished to "renew" his offer and adding only a request for "the complete records of the case together with any other helpful information."[94] Beatrice received another proposition from Charles McCoy, the "Amusement Caterer" at an unidentified "beautiful pleasure resort" on the northeast coast. "I am writing to make you an offer," McCoy stated, "which will combine business with pleasure."

> I can offer you three or four weeks here just for you to exhibit your pet dog. [. . .] The little exhibit would take place in a specially prepared drawing-room at the amusement park here, & you would only exhibit at intervals giving you plenty of time for recreation which would mean a very healthy holiday. I am willing to pay you £30 for the three weeks or £40 for the four weeks, & all expenses. I can arrange for [a] private hotel here, for yourself & family. I will also arrange for a nurse to take care of younger children. Now this will be a splendid holiday for you all & [I] trust you will give this your consideration.[95]

If this offer seems implausible, a theatre reportedly offered to pay Beatrice "a substantial sum if she will appear for a few minutes each evening before the audience and say half-a-dozen words."[96] Her story's marketability is best demonstrated by the sale of her memoir to the *Sunday Express* for more than £3,000. In that context, McCoy's offer of £10 per week must have been less than enticing.

Vengeance, Salvation, Guilt and the Spirit World

Some themes were not so gendered. Several writers, for example, condemned Harry Pace's family, who had initiated the investigations and testified against

Beatrice at the inquest and trial. In a rare compassionate gesture toward the family, Rev. W. Brownrigg sent a letter to the *Dean Forest Guardian*, commenting that sympathy and "material help" were being "lavished" on Harry's widow and stating that Harry's family—particularly his mother—was "equally deserving of consideration": "Let every mother in the country picture to herself," he urged, "the poignant grief of that poor woman who was called upon to witness the agonising death throes of her beloved son."[97] Such sympathy was absent in the sample considered here. Criticism was sometimes expressed generally: a postcard from Crouch End, London wished Beatrice "peace from scandal mongers," and a letter spoke of "the people who were so bitter against you," praying, "may God forgive them for all the wrong they tried to do to you."[98] Most were less magnanimous, one assuring that "in time your enemies will suffer for their wickedness to a good honourable wife like you."[99] Referring to the "cruel lies & accusations made by your late husband's people," Florence Gibbons observed, "there is always One above to see justice [done] & no doubt they will suffer as much some day: if not in this world, in the next."[100] Mrs. Mary Gibbon wrote scornfully of "those that have tried to down you," asserting, "God will certainly severely punish them in good time: so cheer up, don't think any more of the past."[101] Mrs. H. Coulton wrote "I think your late husband's friends are wicked, but God knows best how to punish them & he will do."[102] T.A. Carpenter simply stated: "God moves in a mysterious way—God will avenge you of your enemies."[103] Some found divine punishment insufficient. "I feel," wrote Emily Dunstone, "as doubtless many others do, that you have been a victim of the hate & jealousy of your husband's family, and I think there should be a law to punish people who would maliciously hound down an innocent woman as they have done."[104] For Eleanor Jones, there was unfinished work for the courts: "I would give that brother-in-law of yours 5 years hard labour," she wrote, hoping Beatrice would "have as little as possible to do with the family in the future."[105] H. C. Gordon went so far as to insist that the "principals" in the case would "suffer": "steps," he wrote, were being taken to punish various people, such as the coroner ("for abusing his position"), Harry's brother and mother ("for conspiracy & perjury") and the foreman of the inquest jury ("for failing to do his duty as a juryman").[106]

A thirst for divine vengeance did not exhaust the religious topics among the letters. Of 220 "congratulatory" letters, 52 (23.6%) had some form of religious content that went beyond colloquial expressions such as "God bless" or passing references to having "prayed for" Beatrice. Pace's own public persona was not significantly shaped by religious themes. There are no indications, for instance, in her memoir or other reporting that she and her family attended church, and she made few public references to God or prayer.[107] While women were more likely to have written religious letters (in one quarter of cases compared to about one-fifth of men), the large gender disparity in letters (35 out of 140 from women and 5 out of 24 from men) makes this comparison tenuous.[108] Still, the cross-denominational nature of the response she received testifies to her broad appeal to the religiously inclined. James Kearney described himself as a Catholic priest who "who will never meet you on Earth—but hopes to join you with the good in heaven."[109] Others saw divine intervention behind Beatrice's acquittal. Writing from Chesterfield, Charles Martin admitted the importance of public generosity, a good barrister and a sympathetic jury; however,

> I want you to feel at the back of it all is God; there has [sic] been thousands of prayers gone up on your behalf, and God has answered them. I have watched the case and prayed for you, so God moved the public to sympathy, God moved the hearts to give, God suggested the Counsel, God gave him wisdom, God ordered the Jury.[110]

He urged her to devote her life to God, concluding, "My dear girl we may never meet here but we may meet in Heaven." T. A. Carpenter referred to Beatrice's comment "thank God it's over" after her acquittal. The phrase was "a common one" he observed:

> In your case, I feel it must have been a genuine expression of heartfelt gratitude to the omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent God. During the month of May, whilst reading proceedings in [the] Coroner's Court on the day of your arrest, I felt such an *over-powering conviction in my mind that you were not guilty*—"to me this was from God"—that ever since I have declared to friends that you were innocent.[111]

A more esoteric message came from M. F. Bovenizer. There are two letters from him or her in the sample, and one refers to a third sent "some weeks ago" while Beatrice awaited trial. "In that letter," Bovenizer recalls, "I told you that we as members of a Christian Spiritualist circle in Liverpool, had been told by the Spirits who come and speak to us, that you were innocent of the crime of poisoning your husband."[112] The circle's "chief Spirit Guide"—named "Bluebell"—had told them Beatrice was innocent and the "spirit world" was working for her acquittal. (While "Bluebell" said that Harry had *not* poisoned himself, she did not tell the group what really happened.) The circle prayed for Beatrice's release and rejoiced when their prayers "had been answered":

> At our first meeting following your discharge, Bluebell told us that she had influenced the Judge's mind to discharge you, and explained that our prayers for you had done more to bring about the result, than we could possibly understand.

Three days later, Bovenizer wrote again. A different spirit had described the "false charges" she faced, said many kind things about her and assured the circle that "the spirit world rejoices with her." Bovenizer concluded, "you have been very highly privileged in the way the spirit world have [sic] followed and worked for yourself and your children, when you were in the power of your enemies."[113] The *Sunday News* reprinted a "spirit message" allegedly given by Harry Pace to an American medium that had been reported in a "Christian spiritualist" periodical. In it, he exonerated his wife, claimed he had committed suicide and urged people to save Beatrice.[114]

Gertrude Smart, a twenty-nine-year-old "invalid" from Dorset, saw an even deeper significance in Beatrice's experiences. She had avidly followed her *Sunday Express* memoir, and "after reading this week's installment," she wrote, "I have tried to put myself in your place, although I am single and inexperienced to the ways of the world & its people":

> You have indeed walked side by side with the "Lord Jesus Christ himself" & have experienced a share in His own sufferings, agony of the mind, body, soul & spirit. Did He not say "Whom the Lord love, He chasteneth"?

God had not only "chosen" Beatrice to suffer, she said, but had also given her the strength to endure, and "in great suffering we learn it is not the things of the world which counts [sic] the highest, but the things hidden & unseen by us." As for Harry,

> The one you loved is now in His care, though He will always be with you in Spirit, loving Him as you did with such a deep, self-sacrificing devotion.[115]

Another writer from south Wales praised God for bringing Beatrice back to her children and hoped they would "remember the Lord, for His kindness in bringing you back to them once more. . . . "[116]

Some correspondents urged Beatrice to save her soul. Ernest Jeffrey, "while sympathising much with you," wished to draw her "kind attention" to

> an error in the *Daily Express* about you. It says you were "unsaved by *religion*." Of course *everybody* is in that boat. I am. Religion never yet saved anybody. It is Christ alone that saves, not religion.[117]

Mrs. J. E. Bynon had followed the case intently, and she urged Beatrice to accept God as her "personal saviour."[118] A long letter from Mrs. Mabel Jackson from Louth, Lincolnshire, urged Beatrice to save her soul by being born again. Its tone becomes clear even in a brief excerpt:

> Now, dear Friend, *will you come* to God? Do. *The precious blood shed on Calvary's cross 2000 years* back has wiped away *all* sins, all mistakes, everything you [or] I *ever did amiss*, for in God's word, the Bible, it says, *All* have *sinned* & it says "*You must be born* again." We all must: there is *no respect* of persons with our *Creator*. The *richest & the highest* in *the land* need "*saving*" & all (praise His name!) *can come*, or plunge them[selves] in Calvary's stream (it's free): "*Still it flows, still it flows, still it flows as fresh as ever*" (Praise Him!) from the "*saviour's wounded side*": *Oh—Just* get to *know* Jesus.[119]

There were similar letters.[120] Writers also sent Christian booklets and a rosary.[121]

Finally, although nearly all the letters were congratulatory, a few held more negative views. In her memoir, Beatrice referred to—but did not quote from—letters from some women who questioned her having stayed in her abusive marriage. Jane Goldsmith made a similar point: pleased with Beatrice's acquittal, Goldsmith nevertheless told Beatrice she was "a great fool to stick to a man who treated you worse than a dog." "If you had been a wise woman, you would have given him in charge for threatening to murder you": "I should think a week would be long enough for that you should have run away and have taken your chance to get a living and left him." Wishing Beatrice luck, she could not resist a postscript: "I can't understand any woman being beaten and knocked about by any man; if it had been my case I should have him put where I could find him."[122] Four letters—all of them anonymous—are far more critical. One, signed merely "Woman," cryptically states: "You have stolen a march on your husband, but he will grab you yet. His name indicates it."[123] The others condemned Beatrice. One letter accused, "You have played the part of the hypocrite very well for your own preservation," and referred to her *Sunday Express* memoir:

> Whilst professing to have "respect and love" for your poor husband you sat down and wrote the blackest record against his character that it was possible for anyone to write. Had it been any other country the verdict would have been different, as we are humbugged here with a few sentimental old foggy judges.

Warning that she would face "righteous judgment," it concludes on a note reminiscent of the (by then discredited) theory of the "born criminal" popularized by Cesare Lombroso: "That twist upon your face, from a point of physiognomy is a very bad indication and counts for a good deal of wickedness."[124] Another anonymous letter simply stated:

> Don't imagine that you are a heroine to everyone. If you did not poison your husband, who did? As no one would really be such a fool as to think he killed himself. Anyway your life will be fairly a miserable one for the future, with the awful weight you must have on your evil mind.[125]

Another letter was from a woman who had been "ill-treated" by her husband until she had left him five years previously. In her case, a common experience of suffering did not generate sympathy or identification: she was convinced of Beatrice's guilt and criticized her memoir for tarnishing her husband's name. "You are what I should term a Brazen Hussey," she wrote, agreeing with one of Harry's brother's comments in court that Beatrice was an accomplished "play actress." "He would not tie a woman to the bed if she was not in the habit of going out while he was at work," she wrote, referring to one of the sensational incidents of domestic violence recounted in the *Sunday Express*:

> I am sure he [would have been] just the man that would suit me: a steady, ambitious husband anxious to get a farm so that he might be his own master, which he would have done had he had a suitable partner. Ill-mated marriages generally turn out bad. You are what I should term the modern woman, neither good to *God* or man.

"You will understand by this letter," she added—unnecessarily—"that I am not your admirer."[126] How many people shared this view is unknown; however, that there were so few such letters supports the press claims that Beatrice was the beneficiary of an extraordinary degree of popular support.

Conclusion

Analyzing a popular Australian radio series, Michelle Arrow notes that listeners' memories

> suggest some of the ways in which audiences have used popular culture to understand their own history, underlining how popular culture, far from being ephemeral or disposable, is integral to our understanding of the past, both individual and collective.[127]

Similarly, David Paul Nord observes that historicizing journalism is difficult, since it

> is so ephemeral and the reading of it so commonplace and unremarkable and therefore so commonly unremarked upon in the historical record. Yet it is precisely this commonness that makes the history of journalism readership central to the broader social history of reading in everyday life.[128]

In reader reactions to two Chicago newspapers, Nord finds a complicated set of reading strategies and impressions that were "enormously diverse and often quite idiosyncratic" but also could be seen in terms of "discernable patterns of response."[129] These patterns were largely political and influenced by readers' expectations regarding the functions of journalism. Readers' responses to the Pace case were more personal, reflecting the emotional and melodramatic reporting on the case. As Lyons and Taksa have emphasized, interpretations of texts depend partly on what "each reader brings to his or her reading."[130] Levine observes that people view popular culture "through the filters of their lives": listeners to a Depression-era radio soap opera, for example, identified with particular characters or evaluated plot twists in terms of their experiences. They could, he notes, "see themselves in them."[131] Many of the Pace letters reveal the same kind of emotional and imaginative investment that Levine has found in fictional contexts. Joseph McAleer, examining popular publishing in Britain in the early twentieth century, suggests that "escapism" was "the principal motive in reading during this period, particularly among the working classes."[132] Such escapism, however, was accompanied by a significant emphasis on real-life drama. Adrian Bingham, for example, has innovatively explored the way that the interwar press functioned as a means through which women could communicate with one another about their lives.[133] Many popular newspapers and periodicals in the early twentieth century contained a mixture of light—possibly "escapist"—fiction and stories of women's *real* suffering. Both types of content allowed readers to invest emotion in responding to what they read.

The intensity of the public response to the Pace case also allowed Beatrice's admirers—of both sexes—to feel part of a broader community. Mrs. S. Baker noted, "There was joy in Gloucester, there was joy all round our country side, & towns," and Bessie Yeo stated, "I am sure all Bristol are rejoicing in your liberty," highlighting "the respect there is for you and your dear children in Bristol."[134] Mrs. Blanche Cluitt wrote from the Isle of Wight "on behalf of dozens of sympathizers."[135] A woman from Slough believed that "even in this small town you had 'crowds' of sympathizers," and three married couples in Devon asserted that "if this letter could only be shown in this little town, there would be heaps of signatures."[136] Three couples from Taunton stated "it is only just a little country village & I think every one has prayed for you," a suggestion reinforced by an anonymous letter stating, "We can assure you that you are loved & honoured by us people in Taunton."[137] J. Nicholson wrote from London, "where public opinion almost rules that prevailing in the country": "The feeling here," he wrote, "was exceedingly strong in your favour, and when the result of the trial became known, there was a great relief evinced, and sympathetic hearts went out to you by thousands."[138] Mrs. W. Williams, in South Wales, said that she "and all the country at large" had thought Pace innocent.[139] Mrs. E. Ransome told Beatrice, "you can rest assured that you had the whole country's sympathy."[140] "The whole nation was with you," H. C. Gordon wrote:

> The whole proceedings have been very closely and anxiously watched, not only in your own immediate locality, but in every town throughout the country, and there would have been great demonstrations of anger from all classes of society, had

> there been a different verdict. We would not have stood by silently or helpless and seen you suffer further injustice, neither would the defence have suffered by lack of funds.[141]

Personal motivations aside, many saw themselves as part of a broader community.

The letters here offer only a glimpse of popular reactions to a single event, but they show that readers were neither entirely autonomous nor fully confined in making sense of the Pace case. Their responses were influenced by the way journalists wrote about the case, such as Beatrice's idealization as a wife and mother, the emphasis on her children or the ways that particular elements in Beatrice's "tragic" life—such as Harry's abuse, her separation from her children while awaiting trial, and the virulence of local gossip—were highlighted. Had journalists depicted Pace less positively, there would certainly have been more ambiguity in readers' responses. At least one "structural" factor—sex—also patterned readers' responses: women were not only more fascinated by Beatrice but also in many cases identified with her.

However, at a lower level of generality, readers interpreted the story according to their own idiosyncrasies and accumulated individual experiences: a series of misfortunes, an abusive marriage, or a religious conversion could powerfully shape readers' responses. Some wrote for trivial reasons, such as seeking an autograph.[142] Others, however, invested a great deal in their imagined connection with Beatrice Pace, and the letters provide glimpses of how press stories had an impact beyond the printed page, entering into the social lives of their readers. Not only read in private, articles on the case were discussed in families and among groups of friends. The intense emotionality of many readers' interest in the Pace case—and the way that it became a part of their daily lives—is quite remarkable, testifying not only to the complexity of reader response but perhaps also to the power of imaginary identification and the sympathy it can generate.

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ENDNOTES

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1. The following is merely a selection of influential works. Hans Robert Jauss, "The Change in the Paradigm of Literary Scholarship," in *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception*, trans. Timothy Bahti (Minneapolis, 1982); Stuart Hall, "Encoding/Decoding," in *Culture, Media, Language*, ed. S. Hall, D. Hobson, A. Lowe and P. Willis (London, 1980): 128–38; Poonam Pillai, "Rereading Stuart Hall's Encoding/Decoding Model," *Communication Theory* 2, no. 3 (1992): 221–33; Wolfgang Iser, "Interaction Between Text and Reader," in *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation*, ed. Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (Princeton, 1980): 106–19; Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore, 1974).

2. David Morley, "Audience," in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, ed. Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg and Meaghan Morris (Oxford, 2005), 9.

3. John Storey, "Culture and Power," in *How Globalisation Affects the Teaching of English*, ed. Andrea Gerbig and Anja Müller-Wood (Lampeter, Wales, 2006), 36.

4. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley, 1984), xii.

5. Martyn Lyons and Lucy Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember: An Oral History of Reading* (Melbourne, 1992), 3.

6. David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana, 2001), 267.

7. E.g., David Morley, *The "Nationwide" Audience* (London, 1980); Sujeong Kim, "Rereading David Morley's *The 'Nationwide' Audience*," *Cultural Studies* 18, no. 1 (2004): 84–108.

8. See, e.g., Joseph McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914–1950* (Cambridge, 1989); Janice Radway, *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill, 1984).

9. Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (New Haven, 2001), 1.

10. Lawrence W. Levine, "The Folklore of Industrial Society: Popular Culture and Its Audiences," *American Historical Review* 97, no. 5 (1992): 1373. Emphasis in original.

11. Levine, "Folklore," 1384.

12. Richard D. Altick, *Victorian Studies in Scarlet* (New York, 1970); Rob Sindall, *Street Violence in the Nineteenth Century: Media Panic or Real Danger?* (New York, 1990); Peter King, "Moral Panics and Violent Street Crime 1750–2000: A Comparative Perspective," in *Comparative Histories of Crime*, ed. Barry Godfrey, Clive Emsley and Graeme Dunstall (Cullompton, Devon, 2003), 53–71; Paul Mason, ed., *Criminal Visions: Media Representations of Crime and Justice* (Cullompton, Devon, 2003); Simon Devereaux, "From Sessions to Newspaper? Criminal Trial Reporting, the Nature of Crime, and the London Press, 1770–1800," *The London Journal* 32, no. 1 (2007): 1–27; Jessie Ramey, "The Bloody Blonde and the Marble Woman: Gender and Power in the Case of Ruth Snyder," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 3 (2004): 626–50; Daniel M. Vyleta, *Crime, Jews and News: Vienna 1895–1914* (New York, 2007).

13. On press coverage, see, J. Carter Wood, " 'Mrs. Pace' and the Ambiguous Language of Victimization," in *(Re)Interpretations: The Shapes of Justice in Women's Experience*, ed. Lisa Dresdner and Laurel Peterson (Newcastle, 2009). A summary of the case is available in Linda Stratmann, *Gloucestershire Murders* (Stroud, 2005), 104–19. I am currently completing the first book-length study of the case.

14. The Mrs. Pace Papers, NCCL Galleries of Justice, Nottingham, UK. All references to letters are from this collection. I am grateful to Bev Baker for providing transcripts of the letters. How the correspondence found its way into the papers of Beatrice's solicitor,

G. Trevor Wellington, is unclear. The day after her acquittal, Beatrice left her home for a few weeks, and it may be that the letters were passed along to Wellington and she never claimed them.

15. Nord, *Communities of Journalism*, 267.

16. Nord, *Communities of Journalism*, 267.

17. While maintaining as much as possible the original voices and idioms of the letter writers, I have changed or added punctuation and corrected spelling and capitalization when necessary. Originally underlined passages are presented in italics.

18. E.g., "A Fetter Hill Mystery," *Dean Forest Guardian*, 20 January 1928, 5; "Forest of Dean Mystery," *Times* (London), 17 Jan 1928, 11; "Funeral Stopped," *Daily Mail*, 16 January 1928, 9; "Stopped Funeral Mystery," *World's Pictorial News*, 22 January 1928, 3. The *World's Pictorial News*, although published in Manchester and mainly distributed in the north and midlands, had a London office and was listed under the heading "The London Newspaper Press" in the *Newspaper Press Directory and Advertiser's Guide* (London, 1928), 578. According to its advertisement in the *Directory*, the paper was nationally distributed (especially in rural areas) and catered "principally to artisans, skilled and agricultural labourers, and their respective families."

19. Beatrice was reported to be 36 years old during the inquest and trial, but her birth and death certificates confirm she was two years older.

20. H. Montgomery Hyde, *Norman Birkett: The Life of Lord Birkett of Ulverston* (London, 1964), 246–54.

21. "Gloucester Court Crowded as Mrs. Pace Is Charged with Poisoning Her Husband," *New York Times*, 3 July 1928, 4. I have not traced reporting on the case into the international and colonial press, but some of the letters came from Canada, South Africa or Malta. These writers unfortunately do not specify which newspapers they read.

22. *Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 217, (1928), cols.1890–92 and vol. 219 (1928), cols. 1856–61. For examples of editorials, see "Crime Investigation," *Citizen* (Gloucester), 9 July 1928, 4; "Quash the Verdict," *Daily Mail*, 9 July 1928, 12; T. A. Hannam, "False Verdict Against Mrs. Pace!" *World's Pictorial News*, 15 July 1928, 4; "Cruel Delay," *The People*, 8 July 1928, 10; "Mrs. Pace's Ordeal. A Dangerous System," *Daily Express*, 7 July 1928, 8.

23. Nord, *Communities of Journalism*, 247.

24. Letter #129, 7 July 1928, from H. Buckby, Burton Latimer.

25. The servant is mentioned in letter #22, 6 July 1928, from "an Irish Catholic," London. Ministers: letter #4, 6 July 1928, from Rev. Francis George Price, Cinderford; letter #251, 6 July 1928, from Rev. Walter Floyd, Cinderford.

26. Letter #248, 26 July 1928, from Mrs. Cannon, West Derby.

27. For example: *Daily Mail:* letter #48, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. E. Ransome, Weymouth. *Liverpool Echo* and *Thomson's Weekly News:* letter #248, 26 July 1928, from Mrs. Cannon, West Derby. *Daily Chronicle:* letter #264, 9 July 1928, anonymous. *News of the World:*

letter #201, 9 July 1928, from Robert P. Powell, Narbeth. *Manchester Evening News:* letter #161, 8 July 1928, from Mrs. S. Baker, Bowden, Cheshire.

28. Letter #3, n.d., anonymous.

29. "Today," *Sunday Express,* 8 July 1928, 12.

30. "Acquittal of Mrs. Pace," *News of the World,* 8 July 1928, 9.

31. E.g., letter #42, 6 July 1928, from Nellie Heinsen, London; letter #41, 6 July 1928, from Alice B. Price, Pontypore.

32. "I was delighted to hear on the wireless this evening the verdict": letter #8, 6 July 1928, from D. Jackman, Teignmouth. See also, letter #262, 6 July 1928, from "A native of Monmouth," London; letter #107, [6 July 1928], from Mrs. E. Oke, Holsworthy; letter #141, 8 July 1928, from Olive Gundry, Bridport.

33. Letter #251, 6 July 1928, from Walter Floyd, Cinderford, Gloucestershire.

34. Letter #10, n.d., from Mrs. Edwards, Gloucester.

35. Letter #247, 28 July 1928, from Maisie Cooper, Ontario Canada; letter #229, 23 July 1928, from "N. B.," Malta.

36. Letter #250, 20 July 1928, from Mrs. D. Bain, Alberta, Canada.

37. Letter #228, 10 July 1928, from Mrs. M. Marques, Johannesburg, South Africa.

38. "Two Women on the Rack," *Daily Mail,* 3 July 1928, 11.

39. Letter #78, 7 July 1928, from Emily Dunstone, London.

40. Letter #115, n.d., from Wisher M. Cottrell, London.

41. Letter #77, 7 July 1928, from Annie Hudson, St. Leonards-on-Sea.

42. Letter #81, 7 July 1928, from Nancy D. Griffiths, London.

43. Letter #261, 7 July 1928, from the Berkshire Mothers' Union. Another writer mentioned that she was a member of the M.U.: letter #112, 7 July 1928, anonymous, Norwich.

44. Letter #171, n.d., from Mrs. J. J. Brooks, Lower Cillington.

45. Letter #48, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. E. Ransome, Weymouth; letter #109, 7 July 1928, from Mrs. Skinner, Epsom.

46. Letter #181, 7 July 1928, from Dora Annie Farrow, Aldeby.

47. Letter #196, 8 July 1928, from "Mrs. Anonymous"; letter #188, 9 July 1928, from Mrs. E. Gertrude Williams, Whitchurch.

48. Letter #172, 8 July 1928, from Mrs. C. Whitford, St. Truro.

49. Letter #158, 10 July 1928, from Cecily Coe, Foston.

50. Letter #121, 9 July 1928, from S. Howells, Llanelly.

51. Letter #113, 7 July 1928, from Edith M. Stile, Pinhoe.

52. Letter #136, 8 July 1928, from J. W. Kelly, Gt Leighs; letter #201, 9 July 1928, from Robert P. Powell, Narbeth.

53. Letter #194, 8 July 1928, from Mrs. C. Smith, Ross-on-Wye.

54. Letter #197, 10 July 1928, from Mary A. Chapple, Reading.

55. Letter #161, 8 July 1928, from Mrs. S. Baker, Bowden, Cheshire.

56. Letter #176, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. J. S. MacDonald, Cardiff.

57. Letter #41, 6 July 1928, from Alice B. Price, Pontypore.

58. Letter #45, 6 July 1928, from Florence Wakefield, Farnham, Surrey.

59. Letter #59, n.d. [probably 9 July 1928], from Mrs. A. Coles, Pontypool.

60. Letter #22, 6 July 1928, from "an Irish Catholic," London.

61. Letter #3, n.d., anonymous. Emphasis in original. See also letter #9, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. J. E. Bynon, Bristol; letter #95, n.d., from Mrs. Griggs, Woodside; letter #176, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. J. S. MacDonald, Cardiff.

62. Letter #38, 6 July 1928, from A. E. Woodcock, Rusholme; letter #156, n.d., from Mrs. Williams, Cardiff; letter #194, 8 July 1928, from Mrs. C. Smith, Ross-on-Wye.

63. Letter #116, n.d., from Mrs. Mary Gibbon, St. Helens.

64. Letter #46, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. Wootton, near Merthyr, S. Wales; letter #34, 7 July 1928, from Mrs. W. Williams, Aberdare.

65. Letter #41, 6 July 1928, from Alice B. Price, Pontypore.

66. Letter #181, 7 July 1928, from Dora Annie Farrow, Aldeby.

67. Letter #1, 6 July 1928, from Hilda M. Vickery, London.

68. Letter #222, 5 July 1928, from E. Lawrence, Bexleyheath, Kent.

69. Letter #250, 20 July 1928, from Mrs. D. Bain, Alberta, Canada; letter #225, n.d., from Mrs. Olver and Mrs. Tucker, Chittlehampton.

70. Letter #210, 9 July 1928, from Janet Meek, Leeds.

71. Bernard O'Donnell, "More Secrets of Nightmare Life of Wife under the Hypnotic Spell of Harry Pace," *World's Pictorial News*, 29 July 1928, 14.

72. Letter #247, 28 July 1928, from Maisie Cooper, Southampton, Canada.

73. Letter #246, 30 July 1928, from Jessie Sturgeon, near Bury St. Edmunds.

74. Letter #248, 26 July 1928, from Mrs. Cannon, West Derby.

75. Letter #209, 7 July 1928, from Mrs. Evie Bull, Blandford, Dorset.

76. Letter #224, n.d., from "Violet," Southend-on-Sea.

77. Letter #233, n.d., from Mrs. F. Steer, Watford.

78. Beatrice Pace, "A Talk to Wives by Mrs. Pace," *Sunday Express,* 29 July 1928, 14.

79. Letter #203, 8 July 1928, from Florrie Pace, Southampton.

80. Letter #139, 8 July 1928, from Mrs. M. Miller, Leith.

81. Letter #67, n.d., from Mrs. Allen Price, Billesdon.

82. Letter #4, 6 July 1928, from Rev. Francis George Price, Gloucester.

83. Letter #74, 7 July 1928, from Guardsman W. Short, Brookwood.

84. Letter #207, 10 July 1928, anonymous, Bridlington.

85. Letter #215, 8 July 1928, from Mr. Nicholson, London.

86. Letter #198, 11 July 1928, from Charles Williams-Curgenven, Penzance.

87. Letter #132, 8 July 1928, from C. A. Needham, Manchester.

88. "Offers of Marriage to Mrs. Pace and Her Daughter," *Thomson's Weekly News,* 2 June 1928, 16; Beatrice Pace, "A Talk to Those About to Marry," *Sunday Express,* 5 August 1928, 15. Beatrice Pace, "Accused of the Murder of My Husband," *Peg's Paper,* no. 498 (4 December 1928), 14; no. 499 (11 December 1928), 13–14, 18; no. 500 (18 December 1928), 13.

89. Letter #253, 6 August 1928, from A. Thompson, Stockport.

90. Letter #159, 8 July 1928, from T. Griffiths, Llanelly.

91. Letter #175, 8 July 1928, from A. Wilkinson, Bordon.

92. Letter #241, 15 July 1928, from Arthur Williams, Desborough, near Kettering.

93. Letter #165, 7 July 1928, from Hector Dinnie, London.

94. Letter #53, 7 July 1928, from Hector Dinnie, London. I have not found any record of such a play.

95. Letter #166, 9 July 1928, from Charles McCoy, Cleethorpes.

96. "Acquittal of Mrs. Pace," *News of the World,* 8 July 1928, 9.

97. Letter from the Rev. W. Brownrigg, *Dean Forest Guardian,* 13 July 1928, p. 5.

98. Letter #256, 6 July, 1928, anonymous, Hornsey; letter #208, 11 July 1928, from M. Jenkins, Milford Haven, South Wales.

99. Letter #258, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. R. M. Renton, London.

100. Letter #231, 9 July 1928, from Florence Gibbons, Warwick.

101. Letter #116, n.d., from Mrs. Mary Gibbon, St. Helens.

102. Letter #174, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. H. Colton, Blyth.

103. Letter #111, 7 July 1928, from T. A. Carpenter, Croydon.

104. Letter #78, 7 July 1928, from Emily Dunstone, London.

105. Letter #233, 11 July 1928, from Eleanor Jones, Barton-on-Irwell.

106. Letter #205, 7 July 1928, from H. C. Gordon, Twickenham. Though heavily criticized, neither the coroner nor the foreman could, in fact, be reproached for not having done their jobs.

107. The occasional references to God by Beatrice and her family were used in a common colloquial sense: e.g., "thank God I have always been a good mother" or "if God gives me health and strength to pull through this." "Harry Pace's Rage after Funeral of Child," *World's Pictorial News,* 22 July 1928, 1.

108. Of the 44 congratulatory letters whose writers' sexes cannot be definitively identified, 11 (25%) had a strongly religious character. One of the four "group" letters can be similarly classified. None of the five letters from couples, the two letters from children or the one family letter were strongly religious.

109. Letter #68, 7 July 1928, from James Kearney, P. P., Garvagh, Co. Derry, N. Ireland.

110. Letter #240, July 1928, from Charles John Martin, Chesterfield.

111. Letter #111, 7 July 1928, from T. A. Carpenter, Croydon. Emphasis in original.

112. Letter #75, 8 July 1928, from M. F. Bovinizer, Liverpool.

113. Letter #220, 11 July 1928, from M. F. Bovenizer, Liverpool.

114. The "spirit message": "I want to save my missis [sic]. Set this down for me. My name's Pace—'Arry Pace, you know. It's my woman I want to save. They've got 'er up for murder. Don't let 'er 'ang! I done fer myself. 'Urry! 'Urry, or you'll be too late. I was crazed with pain. I didn't want to live. I thought death would end it all." "Harry Pace 'Comes Back' " *Sunday News,* 15 July 1928, in The National Archives, HO 144/10854/29b.

115. Letter #244, 30 July1928, from Gertrude Smart, Gillingham, Dorset.

116. Letter #208, 11 July 1928, from M. Jenkins, Milford Haven, South Wales.

117. Letter #236, 14 July 1928, from Ernest Jeffrey, West Wimbledon, London. Emphasis in original. I have been unable to find such a direct statement in the *Express*.

118. Letter #9, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. J. E. Bynon, Bristol. Emphasis in original.

119. Letter #227, n.d., from Mabel Jackson, Louth. Emphasis in original.

120. Letter #119, n.d., from Maud Purslow, Manchester ; letter #23, 6 July 1928, from Annie Jones, London.

121. Letter #118, n.d., from Mrs. H. Dawe, Plymouth; letter #187, 9 July 1928, from Helena Bone, Cornwall.

122. Letter #243, 31 July 1928, from Jane Goldsmith.

123. Letter #226, 15 July 1928, anonymous.

124. Letter #237, n.d., anonymous.

125. Letter #234, n.d., anonymous.

126. Letter #218, n.d., anonymous.

127. Michelle Arrow, "'Everything Stopped for *Blue Hills*': Radio, Memory and Australian Women's Domestic Lives, 1944–2001," *Australian Feminist Studies* 20, no. 48, (2005): 305–18.

128. Nord, *Communities of Journalism,* 269.

129. Nord, *Communities of Journalism,* 269.

130. Lyons and Taksa, *Australian Readers Remember,* 3.

131. Levine, "Folklore," 1382.

132. McAleer, *Popular Reading,* 71, 99.

133. Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford, 2004), 10.

134. Letter #161, 8 July 1928, from Mrs. S. Baker, Bowden; letter #26, 6 July 1928, from Bessie Yeo, Bristol.

135. Letter #65, 7 July 1928, from Mrs. Blanche Cuitt, Ryde.

136. Letter #28, 6 July 1928, anonymous, Slough; letter #94, n.d., from Willis, Hole and Vinnicombe, Bradninch.

137. Letter #163, n.d., from Howell, Webber and Clalwathy, Taunton; letter #184, n.d., anonymous, Taunton. See also letter #191, 8 July 1928, from Mrs. Emma Derry, Cannock Wood; letter #113, 7 July 1928, from Edith M. Stile, Pinhoe; letter #86, 7 July 1928, from Mrs. Trobe, London; letter #127, n.d., anonymous, Greater Brighton Hove.

138. Letter #215, 8 July 1928, from J. Nicholson, London.

139. Letter #34, 7 July 1928, from Mrs. W. Williams, Aberdare.

140. Letter #48, 6 July 1928, from Mrs. E. Ransome, Weymouth.

141. Letter #205, 7 July 1928, from H. C. Gordon, Twickenham.

142. "Would you be so kind as to sign your name on the little piece of Paper enclosed, for me to put into my Autograph Book . . . " Letter #230, n.d., from Gordon Stenning, Ditchling.